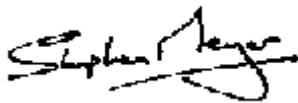


Safety bulletin 2/2004

Quick release arrangements for the manual deployment of inflatable liferafts

This document, containing Safety Recommendations, has been produced for marine safety purposes only on the basis of information available to date.

The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 1999 provide for the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents to make recommendations at any time during the course of an investigation if, in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable to do so.



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Background

The MAIB's preliminary examination into the circumstances which led to the loss of the Newlyn based crabber, *Julian Paul*, off the French coast in May 2004, has identified a potentially serious problem with respect to the manual release arrangements for liferafts fitted to fishing vessels.

It is the custom to lash liferafts to the deck of fishing vessels using rope or webbing straps. Hydrostatic release mechanisms are fitted to the lashing to allow the raft to automatically float free and deploy from a sinking vessel. However, the rope or webbing lashing is also usually fitted with a quick release, senhouse-slip arrangement to facilitate rapid deployment of the raft in the event of an emergency.



Typical senhouse -slip arrangement

When *Julian Paul* began to flood, the crew of the fishing boat found it impossible to release the liferaft from its lashing using the senhouse-slip arrangement. The raft was eventually released by cutting the lashing with a knife.

As a consequence of the problem experienced by the crew of *Julian Paul*, the MAIB commissioned a survey of the lashing arrangements for liferafts on board a number of fishing boats docked in one of the busiest UK fishing ports. The results of the survey revealed that almost one third of the senhouse-slip release arrangements that were inspected could not be easily released to allow rapid deployment of the liferaft.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to give guidance on the specific type or condition of senhouse-slip that would indicate potential problems - to quote the person who conducted the inspections on behalf of the MAIB "*...the only conclusion I can draw is that there is a potential problem which cannot be covered by blanket action. Some of the most rusty horrible senhouse-slips actually were quite easy to remove whilst other modern stainless steel ones proved difficult or impossible to remove....*"

Whilst the foregoing problem was found to exist on fishing vessels, it should be noted that many merchant and pleasure vessels use senhouse-slip quick release arrangements to secure liferafts. It is therefore highly likely that these types of vessel may experience difficulty when attempting to manually release liferafts in an emergency.

Recommendation

Owners and skippers of all fishing, merchant and pleasure vessels are recommended to urgently review the lashing arrangements for liferafts fitted to their vessels to ensure that any manual quick release arrangements can be easily operated as intended. In the event that, on inspection, difficulty is experienced in releasing the lashings from liferafts, the quick release arrangements should be examined and, if required, replaced at the earliest opportunity with a more suitable release system. Ship chandlers or liferaft suppliers should be able to provide you with advice or assistance in this respect.